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RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON 8483  
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE 3493  
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN 4653  
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 2775  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 000231

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STATE FOR WHA/CAR RCBUDDEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2016  
TAGS: [MCAP](#) [SMIG](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [BF](#) [HA](#)  
SUBJECT: DEFENSE FORCE SEEKS TO EXPAND REGIONAL INFLUENCE  
AND U.S. TIES

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Brent Hardt for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On February 9, Ambassador met with Royal Bahamas Defense Force (RBDF) Commodore Clifford Scavella to discuss the bilateral military relationship. Scavella wants to expand the RBDF's international role, and improve its migrant interdiction capabilities. He expressed interest in building a new migrant detention center on Inagua island, purchasing new boats for the RBDF and improving the RBDF base in Inagua. In what has become a theme of discussions with Scavella, he promised to rid the RBDF of corruption and improve RBDF standards. Scavella also repeated another welcome theme -- his goal to strengthen ties with the U.S. This pro-U.S. stance results both from common goals and the need for U.S. support to fund expanded RBDF anti-smuggling capabilities. END SUMMARY.

SCAVELLA PUSHES FOR BAHAMIAN PEACEKEEPING PARTICIPATION  
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¶2. (C) During a meeting with Ambassador February 9, RBDF Commodore Scavella said he sought an expanded Bahamian role in international peacekeeping operations and desired increased CARICOM military coordination on international issues. He specifically noted Haiti as an area of need, and touted the benefits of international experience for Bahamian soldiers. However, he cautioned that a political push was needed to bring the Bahamian government in line with the Bahamian military, and requested US political support for international engagement. NOTE: Scavella served as a military officer for The Bahamas in Haiti and talks often of the benefits he received from his time in Haiti. Following his military service, he worked in the Bahamian embassy in Haiti, including as Charge d'Affaires. END NOTE.

RBDF SEEKS EXPANDED INAGUA OPERATIONS  
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¶3. (C) Also speaking to his international aspirations and focus on Haiti, Scavella said he wanted to expand operations on Great Inagua, The Bahamas' southernmost island approximately 60 miles from Haiti. The RBDF is considering construction of a migrant detention facility on Inagua, which the Ambassador noted could be of great interest to the U.S.

as it develops mass-migration plans. Also under consideration is renovation of housing for Bahamian officers on Inagua. (NOTE: U.S. military personnel are stationed on Inagua as part of Operation Bahamas Turks and Caicos (OPBAT), under significantly better conditions than Bahamian personnel. END NOTE.) Ambassador and Scavella agreed to explore a joint visit to U.S. and Bahamian bases on Inagua, and to continue discussions about potential U.S.-Bahamian partnerships in Inagua and throughout The Bahamas. A follow-up meeting with key staff was tentatively agreed for March.

#### RBDF WANTS EXPANDED NAVY TO FIGHT SMUGGLING

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¶4. (U) Scavella thanked the U.S. for support of The Bahamas through Operation Enduring Friendship, which will provide four 43-foot interceptor boats, equipment and training to improve Bahamian anti-smuggling capability. Scavella also said that The Bahamas also hoped to add two additional 60-foot vessels to its current two-boat fleet in an effort to patrol its 100,000 square mile territory. He requested suggestions of possible suppliers/manufacturers of the new boats was forwarded to the NLO.

#### PRO-U.S. SCAVELLA COMMITTED TO FIGHTING CORRUPTION

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¶5. (U) Finally, noting his desire for improved U.S. trust and cooperation, Scavella repeated his promise to weed corrupt officers from the Force and improve RBDF standards. (NOTE: Scavella gained his position following a decade long investigation of RBDF officer theft of drugs from the smuggling boat Lorrequin. END NOTE.) Scavella specifically

requested that Post provide detailed information regarding officers failing U.S. vetting so that he could take appropriate action against them, including potential removal from the RBDF.

#### MOVING FROM VISION TO REALITY REQUIRES FUNDING

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¶6. (C) COMMENT: The conversation with Scavella was encouraging. He is emerging as a strong leader who is focused on improved standards and deepening U.S. ties. His focus on Haiti and expanded international role suggest an ambitious vision for the RBDF consistent with U.S. goals. While not raising the issue with the Ambassador, Scavella has previously announced his intention to improve anti-smuggling operations by a new base in Grand Bahama and the development of an RBDF air wing based in Nassau. Scavella's plans are welcome, but his ability to carry them out will depend upon new funding. The addition of multiple boats and planes, and the expansion of operations on Grand Bahama and Inagua are not currently in the budget for this small force of only ¶1000. Scavella's overtures to the U.S. and interest in UN peacekeeping can be seen as attempts to secure needed partnerships to fund RBDF expansion. Given Scavella's pro-U.S. bent and goals, Post welcomes existing U.S. military support of the RBDF, particularly Operation Enduring Friendship and the Rhode Island National Guard State Partnership Program. Post would also support new training and equipment initiatives in The Bahamas to help build a more effective and reliable partner in fighting drug and migrant smuggling and in maintaining regional stability and security.

END COMMENT.  
HARDT